

F-22 Gets Green Light for Low-Rate Production

JIM GARAMONE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 16, 2001 – The Defense Acquisition Board has approved the F-22 air superiority fighter to enter low-rate initial production, officials announced Aug. 15.

The decision means Lockheed-Martin will build 10 F-22s using fiscal 2001 funds and 13 in fiscal 2002. There are currently eight F-22s already flying.

“The program has met all its exit criteria for entering into low-rate production and is performing to its design goals,” said Pete Aldridge, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics.

The acquisition board unanimously approved low-rate production, Aldridge said. Low-rate production will run through fiscal 2005 and then shift into high-rate production. Aldridge said the program would provide air dominance through the next 20 years.

The board’s decision requires DoD and the Air Force to seek a lift in the F-22’s current \$37.6 billion budget cap. The production budget would rise to \$45 billion. Research, development, and testing of the aircraft cost about \$18 billion, raising the total cost to about \$63 billion.

The acquisition board also cut the total number of F-22s to be produced from 331 to 295. The board reached this decision because of a difference in the cost estimates

between the Air Force and the independent Cost Analysis Improvement Group.

The Air Force estimated greater savings than the independent group once the F-22 enters high-rate production, Aldridge said. The board’s solution was to accept the Air Force program cost estimates, but the independent group’s estimate of the number of aircraft the money will buy.

The decision gives the Air Force incentive to achieve the savings it forecasted. “If the Air Force can, in fact, get the cost estimate at their level, they can buy more airplanes,” Aldridge said.

Low-rate production is set to rise to 30 aircraft in fiscal 2005. High-rate production calls for 90 aircraft per year beginning in fiscal 2006.

Aldridge said the plan can change as circumstances dictate. “Anything can happen next year,” he said. “It depends on what happens to the budget, what happens to the production, what happens in the operational test and evaluation. We address these programs every year, but we have to lay out a plan. Right now, this is our plan.”

Editor’s Note: Garamone is a public affairs specialist with the American Forces Press Service. This information is in the public domain at <http://www.defenselink.mil>.